



Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer and Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge

Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Planning Update 1



Greetings

Wintering dusky geese at Julia Butler Hansen Refuge. Photo USFWS.

Over the next year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will be seeking input from the public, interested agencies, Tribes, and organizations regarding their interests, concerns and viewpoints about important refuge management issues. This information will be helpful in the production of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge (Lewis and Clark Refuge) and Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer (JBH Refuge).

This is the first in a series of planning updates to keep you informed and invite your participation in the planning process for these Refuges.

Help Us Plan for the Future!

As we begin this planning process, we are provided the opportunity to look at our habitat management and public programs from fresh perspectives.

The purposes of the Refuges will remain the same as when the areas were set aside to protect habitat for wildlife, and to provide wildlife dependent recreation consistent with wildlife needs. However, we have a chance to review each of our public programs such as fishing, hunting, or environmental education; our placement of facilities such as trails, boat ramps, or signs; and

our management of habitats such as wetlands, riparian zones, pastures and wood lots. Your insights and observations are needed to provide a more complete and thoughtful process.

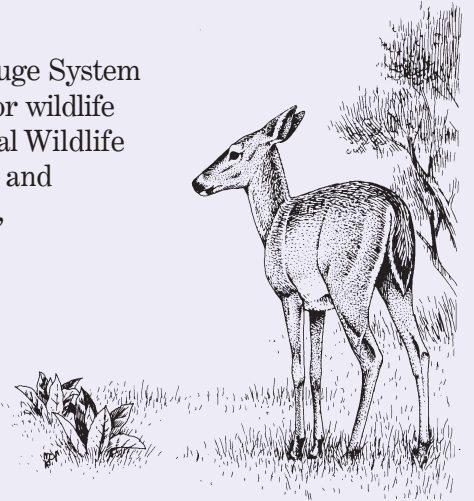
Please share your ideas with us by attending upcoming public meetings (see page 7 for details) or by submitting written comments to the refuge (see page 8 for contact information).

Your participation is critical to the success of this effort – we want to hear from you!

National Wildlife What?

Refuges are places where wildlife comes first. The National Wildlife Refuge System comprises the world's largest collection of lands set aside specifically for wildlife and provides important habitat for native plants and animals. The National Wildlife Refuge System is administered by the Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for the benefit of the American people.

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is:
"To administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."



Columbian white-tailed deer yearling. Kendal Morris, USFWS.

Refuges Overview

The Lewis and Clark Refuge was established in 1972 to preserve wintering and foraging habitat for migratory waterfowl and to protect nesting and roosting habitat for bald eagles. It was also established to protect the Columbia River estuary and its bottomlands, islands, and tidelands. Its boundaries encompass more than 33,000 acres of the Columbia River estuary, including tidal marsh, swamp, sandbars, and mudflats. The Refuge supports a diverse assemblage of native fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats including rare Sitka spruce swamp.

The JBH Refuge was established in 1971 specifically to protect the endangered Columbian white-tailed deer (CWT deer). The Refuge contains over 6,000 acres of pastures, forested tidal swamps, woodlots, marshes, and sloughs, and is located along the Columbia River in both Washington and Oregon. The valuable Refuge habitat preserved for the CWT deer also benefits a large variety

of wintering birds, river otter, various reptiles and amphibians, several pairs of nesting bald eagles and osprey, and many other species.

Preliminary Goals

Goals are broad statements intended to provide direction for the future management of the Refuges. They are based on the purposes of the Refuges, the mission and policies of the National Wildlife Refuge System, input received through this planning process, and the key issues identified as most significant to these Refuges. The planning team has developed preliminary goals for both Refuges and would like your input on them.

Lewis and Clark Refuge

Goal 1: Preserve and protect the rare Sitka spruce swamp and riparian cottonwood forest, tidal marshes, mudflats, islands, and sandbars typical of the lower Columbia River estuary.

Goal 2: Provide a variety of quality, wildlife-dependent

recreational opportunities focusing on the unique solitude possible on the Refuge, which makes the Refuge a meaningful place to visit, explore, and enjoy.

Goal 3: To provide quality outreach and educational programs that foster a sense of public pride and ownership in the Refuge, and develop public recognition of its role in the lower Columbia River ecosystem.

Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer

Goal 1: Provide and maintain a mosaic of small pastures, woodlands, wetlands, and riparian shrublands for the benefit of the CWT deer, dusky Canada geese, northern harrier, and other species.

Goal 2: Provide a complex of freshwater wetlands (tidal and non-tidal) representative of the historic lower Columbia River ecosystem for the benefit of CWT deer, dusky Canada geese, amphibians, bats, and other species.

Goal 3: Provide riparian shrub habitat representative of the →

historic lower Columbia River ecosystem supporting a diverse community of native species including CWT deer, willow flycatcher, and other land birds.

Goal 4: Provide woodlands representative of the historic lower Columbia River ecosystem for the benefit of CWT deer, neotropical migrants, bats, amphibians, and other species.

Goal 5: Control and/or eradicate invasive species in order to maintain or restore habitats on the Refuge.

Goal 6: To provide opportunities for high quality, wildlife dependent recreational activities that foster an appreciation of the CWT deer, their habitats, and other native species of the lower Columbia River ecosystem.

Goal 7: Provide quality outreach and educational programs that foster an appreciation of the CWT deer, their habitats, and other native species of the lower Columbia River ecosystem.

Preliminary Issues to be Considered

In preparing the CCP, a range of possible alternative management approaches will be explored and evaluated, including current management practices. The effects of the various alternatives on the biological resources and local communities will be evaluated in an Environmental Impact Statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

The planning team has identified some potential issues to be considered during CCP development. We would like to hear your comments on these issues, and any other topics of concern, at our public meetings (see page 7). If you aren't able to attend one of our public meetings, please submit your comments in writing to the Refuge (see page 8 for contact information).

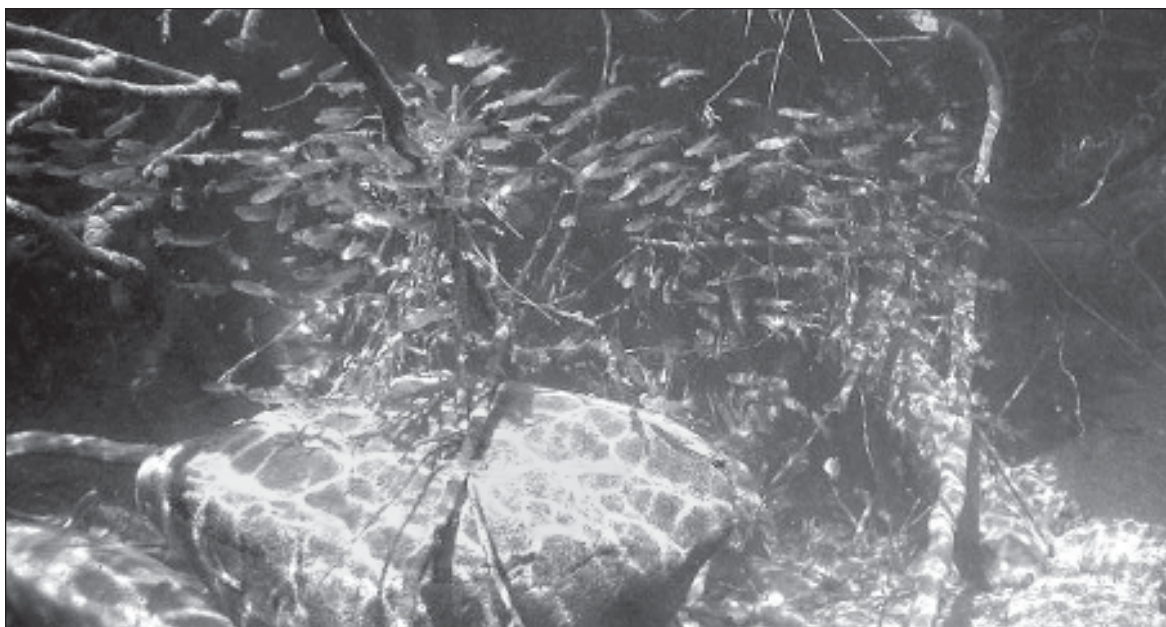
Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge

Dredged materials management:

Columbia River channel maintenance and deepening activities continue to generate dredge spoil accumulations within the Refuge boundary. Dredge spoil provides habitat for colonial nesting birds and streaked horned larks. The CCP will assess the impacts of dredge spoil placement and what, if any, Refuge actions are needed to maximize wildlife benefits.

Colonial Nesting Bird

Management: Colonial nesting birds (great blue herons, gulls, terns, cormorants, etc.) occur throughout the lower Columbia River estuary. The management of these birds is generally limited to protecting roosting and nesting areas from disturbance. Colonial nesting birds have been the focus of recent attention because many feed on young salmon smolts as well as other fish that travel through the estuary. The CCP will focus on —▶



Restoring riparian habitat, and floodplain wetlands will improve habitat quality for anadromous fish migrating in the Columbia River system.

Coho stilly. Photo USFWS.

management needs for these birds and how they can be encouraged to maintain their population base while limiting their impact on anadromous fish.

Oregon Department of State Lands Management Agreement:

In 1974 the Refuge signed an agreement with Oregon Department of State Lands to allow the Refuge to manage the State-owned lands within the boundary of Lewis and Clark Refuge, this agreement expired in 1994. The CCP will consider managing the State lands within the boundaries of the Refuge and what management activities should be covered in the agreement.

Commercial Guiding: Reports of commercial guiding activities such as hunting, fishing, and kayaking, continue to increase within Refuge boundaries. Commercial use of a

refuge requires a special use permit and a compatibility determination to determine if “the use does or does not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the mission of the refuge.”

The CCP will assess the current and future demand for commercial guiding, how and if guiding activities should be regulated, and what stipulations may be necessary to ensure that any allowed uses are compatible with the purposes of the Refuge.

Camping On Refuge Lands:

Refuge policy states that “camping on refuge lands is allowed only when required to implement or sustain an approved wildlife/wildlands oriented recreational activity or when no other alternative is practical.”

Camping occurs within the boundaries of Lewis and Clark Refuge, primarily on State-owned, dredge spoil islands. The CCP will review the Service’s campground policy and how it relates to Refuge islands.

Wilderness Study: Lewis and Clark Refuge is part of the largest marsh in western Oregon. Due to the relative remoteness and lack of influences by humans, some of the islands within the 33,000-acre Refuge boundary may meet the criteria for wilderness designation.

It should be noted that while a wilderness designation can be recommended, only Congress has the authority to designate wilderness. The CCP will study whether any of the Refuge’s islands have the potential for wilderness designation.

Tundra swan. Photo: USFWS.



The Lewis and Clark Refuge encompasses the largest marsh in western Oregon. It provides habitat for peak populations of 1,000 tundra swans, 5,000 Canada geese, and 50,000 ducks in February and March each year prior to their northward migration.

Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer

Population Management of Predators to Protect Columbia White-tailed Deer Fawns:

Predation on CWT deer, primarily by coyotes, continues to be a major factor in meeting CWT deer population recovery goals. In order to maintain a healthy and viable population, as specified by the CWT deer Recovery Plan, predation will need to be managed. The CCP will explore the best way to reduce predation on CWT deer fawns.

Mosquito Borne Disease/Bird Flu Concerns: Public concerns over wildlife diseases that are transmissible to humans have increased in recent years. The role the Refuge plays in addressing/responding to these diseases may impact its short- and long-term management actions. The CCP will explore the Refuge's role and appropriate responses to these concerns.

Management of Public Access and Use: Interest in public recreation on the Refuge continues to increase.

The CCP will consider how it can best meet priority public use needs (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation) while also protecting wildlife and habitat.

Tidal Wetland and Stream Restoration for Native Fish Enhancement: Over this last century, major losses of historic intertidal marsh and riparian forest habitat have occurred within the lower Columbia River estuary. This loss of habitat has had a profound effect on the native fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats of the region. The CCP will assess the potential for restoring native estuarine habitat to portions of the Refuge in concert with protecting habitat for the federally endangered CWT deer.

Wildlife and Habitat Management: The Refuge is actively managing habitat on the mainland and Tenasillahe Island units for the benefit of the CWT deer. Invasive species such as purple loosestrife and reed

canarygrass degrade the natural habitat, resulting in a need for intensive habitat management activities. The CCP will examine current management practices and potential new actions for meeting JBH Refuge purposes, trust resource responsibilities, and maintaining/restoring biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health.

Wilderness Study: Due to the relative remoteness and lack of influences by humans, two of the JBH Refuge's islands, Hunting and Wallace, may meet the criteria for a wilderness designation. It should be noted that while a wilderness designation can be recommended, only Congress has the authority to designate wilderness. The CCP will study whether any of the islands in the Refuge have potential for wilderness designation.

Education and Outreach: The Refuge is actively managing habitat and wildlife on the mainland and Tenasillahe Island units. The CCP will explore how to better engage and educate the public on Refuge management activities.

Photo: USFWS.



Approximately 300 Columbian white-tailed deer live on the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge; another 300-400 live on private lands along the river. The areas upstream from the Refuge on Puget Island and on the Oregon side of the river are vital to reestablishing and maintaining viable populations of the species. The Refuge works with state agencies, and private and corporate landowners to maintain and reestablish deer on their lands.

Issues Outside the Scope of the Plan

While CCPs are very comprehensive plans, no single CCP can cover all issues. The planning team has made a list of some of the issues which we currently believe are outside the scope of this CCP.

Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer

Elk Management: High numbers of elk on the Refuge have resulted in unacceptable levels of competition for food and cover between the elk and the CWT deer. Options for controlling the size of the elk herd have recently become more restricted due to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's concerns regarding relocation of these animals.

As a result of these factors, the Refuge staff prepared a Hunt Plan, Environmental Assessment, and Compatibility Determination allowing a limited annual elk hunt on the mainland unit of the Refuge. The elk hunt was initiated during November 2005. Elk hunting on the Refuge as a management strategy for the herd is incorporated by reference within this CCP.

Deer Depredation: CWT deer have been relocated off of the Refuge as part of the recovery effort described within the recovery plan. During the early 1990s there were some complaints regarding CWT deer depredation on private property on Puget Island. If deer depredation occurs, complaints may again be directed at the Refuge staff. This issue was not included in this CCP, however, because local depredation complaints have not occurred

during the past ten years associated with relocations.

LNG Facility: A plan to construct a Liquefied Natural Gas Plant (LNG) adjacent to the Refuge is currently under consideration and review. This plan is extremely controversial for the local community. While this facility is not on Refuge lands, the public is questioning the safety/aesthetic/resource concerns of a LNG plant being adjacent to a National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, LNG security concerns may impact the Refuge's ability to access its docking site and buildings on Tenasillahe Island. This issue is outside the scope of the CCP, and can be better addressed as part of the planning process for that facility.

Lewis and Clark NWR

Floathouses: Thirty-one floathouses are currently located in the channels in and adjacent to Refuge lands. They are within the designated boundaries of the

Refuge but are technically on Oregon State tidelands. A joint Memorandum of Understanding between the Service, Clatsop County, Oregon Department of State Lands, and floathouse owners was developed to allow the existing floathouses to remain while prohibiting the placement of new structures. This topic will not be addressed in the CCP because it is now in the final stages of implementation.

East Sand Island Management: In 1999, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) initiated a pilot project to relocate a 9,000-pair Caspian tern colony from Rice Island to East Sand Island. In addition to the terns, East Sand Island supports numerous colonial nesting birds including double-crested cormorants, brown pelicans, western/glaucous-winged gulls, and Brant's cormorants as well as migrating shorebirds. East Sand Island is located outside the boundaries of the Refuge. Because this island is not owned by the Refuge, and is located outside Refuge boundaries, it is outside the scope of this CCP.

Bald eagle nest on Lewis and Clark Refuge. Photo USFWS.



You are invited to the first Open House Public Scoping Meetings

The first public scoping meetings are opportunities for you to help us identify the issues to be addressed in the CCP and to have your questions answered about the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer and Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge. Four open-house style public meetings are scheduled at different locations for your convenience.

Longview

Date: Tuesday, October 17, 2006

Time: 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Place: Cowlitz Public Utility District (PUD)
961 12th Avenue
Longview, WA 98632

Astoria

Date: Thursday, October 19, 2006

Time: 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Place: Astoria Public Library, Flag Room
450 10th Street
Astoria, OR 97103

Cathlamet

Date: Monday, October 23, 2006

Time: 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Place: River Street Meeting Room
25 River Street
Cathlamet, WA 98612

Clatskanie

Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2006

Time: 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Place: Clatskanie City Hall
95 N Nehalem
Clatskanie, OR 97016

Tentative Planning Schedule

Planning Step

Target Date

Planning Update 1 issued.....September 2006

Public Meetings.....October 2006

Planning Update 2 issued.....January 2006

Planning Update 3 issued.....August 2007

Public Review/Comment on Draft CCP/EIS.....December 2007

Final CCP.....February 2008

Schedule dates are tentative and subject to change as the planning process progresses.



*The Columbian white-tailed deer population is closely monitored on the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge.
Photo USFWS.*

How Do I Contact the Service or Provide Comments?

For Information on the National Wildlife Refuges:

Charlie Stenvall, Project Leader
Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Complex
3888 SR 101
Illwaco, WA 98624-9707
Phone: (360) 484-3482
Fax: (360) 484-3109
E-mail: FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov
Web: <http://www.fws.gov/willapa/>

For Information on the CCP planning process:

Rebecca Young, Conservation Planner
1211 SE Cardinal Court, Suite 100
Vancouver, WA 98683
Phone: (360) 604-2563
Fax: (360) 604-2505
E-mail: FW1PlanningComments@fws.gov
Web: <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning/>



*U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Planning and Visitor Services
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232*

Address correction requested

In this issue:
Your comments on the
Julia Butler Hansen
and Lewis and Clark
National Wildlife
Refuges are
requested. What
natural resource
issues are important
to you?



Visit the website for the Julia Butler Hansen and Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuges at <http://www.fws.gov/willapa/>